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SUBJ: PHNOM PENH'S 2008 ANNUAL OVERSEAS SECURITY ADVISORY COUNCIL  
(OSAC) CRIME AND SAFETY REPORT

REF: 08 STATE 132056

1. The following responses are keyed to the questions posed in  
reftel.

I. Overall Crime and Safety situation: Criminal activity in Cambodia remained high in 2008. The chances of being a victim at night were much greater than during the day. However, daytime robberies are common if a person fails to take basic security precautions. Corruption within the Cambodian National Police (CNP) has led to the increase in the number of criminals roaming the streets of the major cities and towns. This has been a factor in an upward trend in the number of armed robberies and shootings in Phnom Penh and the provinces. The majority of the crimes committed in Cambodia are for financial gain. Youth gangs comprised of wealthy, teen-aged males, continue to operate in Phnom Penh. These gangs can be violent and typically attack each other over turf battles and perceived insults. Innocent civilians have been injured or killed after getting caught in the middle of these battles. The ineffectiveness and corruption in the CNP leads to vigilante justice. And on occasion, suspected criminals have been beaten to death by mobs. A government effort to control access to firearms has met with limited success. While military weapons are no longer sold openly in the city, they are still available to criminal elements.

A. Crime Threats: Violent crimes, especially strong-arm and armed robberies, continue to occur. Westerners continue to fall victim to these crimes. There was an increase in the past year of the number of reports the RSO received from Embassy personnel, NGOs and expatriates of snatch thefts and attempted snatch thefts and residential break-ins. Americans who follow sound personal security procedures, to include employing 24-hour residential guards, are victimized less often than the general population. Persons riding on the back of moto-taxis are at the greatest risk of falling victim. Thefts of motorbikes, auto parts and other petty thievery continue at previous high levels. Counterfeit United States currency is a constant problem. There has been an increase in the number of reported acts of random gunfire within Phnom Penh. The government issued a sub-decree stating that military and off-duty police were not allowed to use their issued weapons for the purpose of moon-lighting as security guards. The affect of the sub-decree remains to be seen.

B. Safety: The road infrastructure in the city continues to improve. However, Americans are highly discouraged from traveling outside the city during hours of darkness. In many regions of the country, the paved roads are deteriorating as a result of flooding during the rainy season. The roads outside the city lack lighting, painted dividing lines and proper guard rails. Furthermore, local vehicles are likely to be driven without operational headlights and ever present livestock create hazardous driving conditions.

## II. Political Violence:

A. Historical Perspective: The government continues to function and provide an outward appearance of stability. Demonstrations are less common and are, for the most part, peaceful and controlled by government forces. Exceptions are labor, land and religious demonstrations that can become violent. The police lack the proper training to effectively control demonstrations and can be heavy handed in their response. Cambodia's national elections held in July 2008 were conducted in a peaceful and orderly manner. There was little obvious evidence of anti-American sentiment among the

Cambodian people but this could change as events develop elsewhere in the world. Violence in Cambodia is common and it is often difficult to differentiate politically motivated violence from simple personal disputes. Military weapons are sometimes used to settle personal disputes, injuring or killing innocent persons.

1B. Regional Terrorism and Organized Crime: In September of 2002, the American Embassy closed for approximately one month after specific terrorist threat information became known. In November 2006, the government arrested six alleged domestic terrorists that planned to conduct an attack during the annual Water Festival. In July 2007, the government arrested and ultimately convicted and imprisoned individuals that unsuccessfully attempted to detonate three improvised explosive devices at the Vietnam-Cambodia Friendship Monument in Phnom Penh. The Water Festival and Vietnam-Cambodia Friendship Monument incidents were not anti-Western in nature, but meant to embarrass the ruling political party.

1C. International or Transnational Terrorism: Concern still exists over the potential for Muslim extremist-related terrorist activity in Cambodia. There were no anti-American terrorist attacks reported in Cambodia during the year.

1D. Civil Unrest: In January 2003, the police lost control of Phnom Penh for several hours as anti-Thai mobs sacked and burned the Thai embassy and then rampaged through the city burning Thai businesses. This was all in response to an alleged comment made by a Thai actress. 2008 saw an increase in forced evictions. In some instances the government ordered the homes destroyed and increased the likelihood of additional civil unrest. The border claim dispute between Cambodia and Thailand in Preah Vihear Province continues to be a potential source for civil unrest.

### III. Post-Specific concerns:

1A. Crime: Robbery, burglary and theft remain a significant problem in Phnom Penh. Organized crime continues to take advantage of government corruption and police incompetence.

1B. Traffic: Traffic accidents are a significant threat. The traffic situation in Phnom Penh deteriorated in 2008. Poor driver training, excessive speed and negligence are prime contributors to the increase in traffic accidents we witnessed in 2008. Vehicle travel to the provinces can be dangerous, especially at night. Livestock will typically sleep on the road and motor vehicles are operated without headlights or reflective devices. Visitors operating a vehicle must have a Cambodian driver's license and local third-party insurance. In some cases, drivers involved in a traffic accident have been robbed or assaulted by the mob that invariably gathers at the scene of an accident - but this has been rare.

1C. Health and Environment: During monsoon season, May through October, heavy rains can cause sporadic flooding in parts of the country and along the city streets in Phnom Penh. During this season many roads and bridges are often impassable. Cambodia has reported a number of Avian Influenza cases, but they have been contained to the countryside. Cambodian farmers typically live in close contact with domestic and wild birds. The threat of HIV/AIDS is omnipresent, especially among commercial sex workers.

1D. Drugs: The CNP (with U.S. Embassy assistance) in 2007 dismantled a major drug lab that was manufacturing precursor chemicals that could be used to produce methamphetamine type stimulants (MTS). Marijuana, heroin, and MTS are available in the major cities and tourist areas.

IV. Police Response: The typical police officer in Cambodia is poorly paid, poorly trained, and lacks discipline and the necessary resources and equipment to operate effectively. Foreign victims of crime receive no investigative support. Reporting a crime to the police is of no value and will only lead to an additional expense for the victim because he or she will be asked to pay a fee to have a report written. Corruption continues to be a major problem here with police personnel often committing serious crimes themselves. Self-discipline is often lacking.

1A. Police Harassment: Foreigners and Cambodians are continually stopped by the police for real and alleged minor traffic violations

and asked for a bribe. Even so, American citizens should report crimes committed against them, when possible, to the local police station, and especially to the Embassy's Consular Section. Foreigners should politely decline to pay for a police report.

1B. Local police emergency numbers: Country Code: 855  
(If calling from overseas, drop the 0 after the country code) Phnom Penh municipal central command post, 012-999-999; Siem Reap 012-180-8886 or 011-288-893; Sihanoukville 012-884-828 or 016-884-828 (These are cell phone numbers, which may not be answered and result in a meaningful police response.)

1V. Medical Emergencies: Post currently has an operational health unit staffed by a Foreign Service Health Practitioner. The SOS International Medical Clinic is located on the corner of Streets 51 and 228. An American doctor operates the clinic. Ambulance services in Phnom Penh are minimal, and well below US standards. Dial 119 to access the local EMS system. Most ambulance services are operated by private hospitals. Travelers are strongly recommended to carry adequate medical evacuation insurance. The cost of a private medevac flight to Bangkok can be catastrophic.

1A. Contact information for local hospitals: Country Code 855 (If calling from overseas, drop the 0 after the country code).

SOS International Clinic: 023-216-911, 023-215-911, 023-216-959

Access Medical Services: 012-813-358

Australian Medical Clinic: 023-881-020, 012-810-600, 012-812-064

Community & Family medical Clinic: 012-803-610

Calmette Hospital: 023-426-948

European Dental Clinic: 023-211-363, 023-362-656, 018-812-055

European Medical clinic: 023-362-656

Naga Medical Center: 011-811-175

American Medical Centre: 012-891-613, 023-991-863

1B. Air Ambulance Service: N/A

VI. Travel Precautions; How to avoid becoming a victim: Individuals are advised to only carry what they are willing to lose, and to take the path of least resistance when confronted with an armed robber.

A) Pickpockets: Transportation centers, market areas, special events, river front area and crowded buses traveling to the provinces are prime areas for pickpockets. Avoid carrying wallets or passports in back pockets. If at all possible, purses should not be carried. If a purse or bag is carried, keep it closed and in front of the wearer.

B) Robbers: Do not walk the streets at night. Avoid transport by moto-taxi. It is preferable to lease a private driver for the length of your stay in Cambodia. There are few, if any, formal rental agencies. You may arrange for car rental through your hotel or a local travel office. Metered taxi services featuring English speaking dispatchers are becoming more prevalent. Avoid taking taxis that are already occupied. Avoid driving alone after dark. Keep car windows and doors closed and locked. Avoid dimly lit areas. Socialize at reputable restaurants and bars. Carry only as much cash as you are willing to lose. Credit cards are rarely used in Cambodia, except at major international hotels and restaurants, and it is best not to carry them with you. Avoid wearing expensive looking jewelry. Wear and carry only those items you are prepared to lose. Do not resist if you are the victim of a robbery. Criminals will typically use force, to include deadly force, when confronted with a victim that attempts to resist. Westerners have reported being threatened or cut with knives despite complying with the robbers.

C) Auto theft: Always remove keys when you exit the vehicle. Avoid driving after dark. Keep car windows closed and doors locked.

Vehicle break-ins are a frequent occurrence in Phnom Penh. Criminals will steal mirrors, spare tires, lights, trim and accessories off of expensive vehicles to be sold for a profit. This requires the victim to travel to an auto repair shop to buy back or replace the stolen items.

D) Residential Security: Install metal grills on all doors and windows. Keep all doors and windows closed and locked. Ensure the residence has adequate lighting around the perimeter. Know how to use alarm systems. Hire twenty-four hour guard protection from a reputable company.

E) Beggars: Avoid giving money to beggars and children. The children are typically forced to beg by their parents to support a drug habit. Word spreads fast and you may soon find yourself surrounded and under siege by other people wanting money. Many are pickpockets working in groups.

F) Travel Advisory: The Embassy issued a warden message in July 2008, regarding tensions on the Thai-Cambodian border (Preah Vihear Province in Cambodia and Sisaket Province in Thailand) recommending that American citizens defer travel to the area until the situation has been resolved. Thai and Cambodian troops have exchanged gunfire resulting in reported injuries and fatalities on both sides. The situation remains unresolved.

G) Off Limits Areas: The entire city of Phnom Penh is dangerous after hours. Late night movement around the city should be avoided. The "Heart of Darkness" club is off limits to Mission personnel.

H) Other: Report any incidents to the Embassy's Consular Section. Always provide personal information, including travel plans, to the Consular Officer. Keep a low profile.

I) Local Security Firms: There are several private security services operating in Phnom Penh. None are associated with the U.S. Embassy Guard Force.

VII. Embassy Contact Numbers (If calling from overseas, drop the 0 after the country code).

Embassy: 855-023-728-000  
Post One: 855-023-728-111  
Consular: 855-023-728-197  
Regional Security Officer: 855-023-728-169  
Embassy after-hours Duty Officer: 855-012-814-800

VIII. OSAC Country Council: Post OSAC Country Council meets quarterly. The points of contact are as follows (If calling from overseas, drop the 0 after the country code):

Wade L. Boston  
RSO  
(P)855-023-728-169  
(F)855-023-728-600  
bostonwl(at)state.gov

Jared M. Thurman  
ARSO  
(P)855-023-728-207

(F)855-023-728-600  
thurmanjm(at)state.gov

Mr. Bretton (Brett) Sciaroni  
Sciaroni and Associates  
(P)855-023-210-225  
(F)855-023-213-089  
brett(at)sa-cambodia.com

Michael Stephen  
Mekong Bank  
(P) 855-023-430-980  
(F) 855-023-430-431  
stass(at)pacific.net.sg

James Swander

Devco Capital  
(P) 855-023-883-488  
(F) 855-23-426-752  
jim.swander(at)devcocaptial.com

¶2. For further clarification please contact RSO Wade Boston or ARSO  
Jared Thurman

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